

### THE CONTACT PERIOD

175 little progress was made in attracting the Indians to the  
797 mission. The priests made the rounds of the villages preaching and baptizing, and children were recruited for the school, but such contacts were sporadic.

In the late 1920's, the world price of rubber rose somewhat as a result of export restrictions imposed on the plant-  
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[361] ers of British Malaya, and the attraction of higher returns  
[166] caused the Indians to become more engaged in trade. This  
[162] meant, of course, that more Indians came into contact with the mission in its new role as a trading post. The regatões still offered competition, but the Mundurucú, who knew nothing of weights and prices, nonetheless learned that they received a greater return for their rubber and manioc flour from the missionaries. They came to tap rubber in increasing numbers along the Cururú, and many left the savannah villages for all-year residence on its shores. By the 1930's, permanent villages began to grow up on the river banks. This population shift proceeded so rapidly that by 1950 there were only about 360 Mundurucú left on the savannahs, whereas the Cururú population numbered 700.

175 Of less importance in attracting a permanent popula-  
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657 tion to the Cururú was the founding on that river of the Mundurucú post of the Brazilian Indian Protection Service in 1941. This post followed the establishment of an Indian reservation in 1939 that included most of the country lying inland from the Tapajós and bounded by the Cururú and Tropas rivers. Traders were barred from the reservation but since no inspection points were set up on the Tropas, Cabitutú, and Cadiriri rivers, the Tapajós River patrons and some regatões were still able to visit the savannahs. However, the Cururú, where the bulk of the Mundurucú population now lives, was effectively closed

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to outside commerce, and a trade monopoly is now held by the mission and the post. 175  
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The population shift to the Cururú has had profound effects on Mundurucú society. Before 1930 there were fifteen villages in the interior region between the Tropas and the Cururú. Today there are only seven, for the eight villages nearest to the Cururú were abandoned after their populations had been steadily drained to the banks of the river. On the Cururú, there are no traditional villages. There is no men's house, and the architecture is local Brazilian. Six of the seven remaining savannah villages maintain the men's house and a modified form of the native dwelling. 175  
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Except for the village of Cauí, established in the 1930's by a few conservative Indians dissatisfied with life on the Cururú, all contemporary savannah villages are two to three days' march from the shores of the Cururú. The contact between the two populations is diminishing; they trade in different places, their way of life has become differentiated, and they feel themselves to be different. The Cururú River people ridicule the *campineiro*, the Brazilian term for a dweller of the savannahs, because "he has no clothes," "he is lazy," "his houses are dirty," and "he sleeps with a fire under his hammock at night." Actually, such ridicule reflects a sense of inferiority among the Cururú-River Mundurucú, because they at the same time respect the *campineiro* for his greater knowledge of the traditional culture, his supposedly still-existent warlike proclivities, and the fear that he may be a powerful sorcerer. The missionaries have inspired many of the stereotypes of the *campineiro* as an uncouth backwoodsman in order to persuade the people to abandon their native practices and accept missionary instruction. The *campineiro*, on the other 175  
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## SOLIDARITY AND FISSION

the right to exploit the trees reached by the path; no concept of land or territorial private property is implied. Also, a man's right to a rubber avenue is recognized as valid and absolute only as long as he works it. If he abandons it, it may be worked by another after the former owner's permission is asked. If the owner of a rubber avenue dies, it passes to a son or son-in-law, who may either work it or dispose of it. Rubber avenues are not bought and sold by the Mundurucú and are not in themselves subject to commercial transaction. But despite this, they form the only type of natural resource subject to private ownership in this society. This fact gains increasing social importance in direct ratio to the dependence of the Mundurucú on the returns of rubber production. As this dependence increases, so does its individualizing effect on the society. [423] [929] [182]

Almost all Mundurucú tap rubber on land reserved by the government for their use. The traders do not have any right of allocation of these rubber avenues, as they do in the areas under their control. Technically, the Indian is an independent producer, working on his own property as a free laborer, and selling on the market. But the same system of exclusive patronage and debt obligation that prevails in the Amazon has been extended to the native population, and the market is not an open one. That the Indian cannot be dispossessed from his rubber avenue, and that he does not rely on the trader for food give him somewhat more independence than the Brazilian rubber tapper, however. [657] [648] [439] [472]

Other, traditional bonds, reinforce the patron-client relationship. The tie is sometimes conceived of as between the trader and the leader of a group of Indians, as in the instance of the chief of Cabruá, who trades on behalf of a bloc of villagers. The patron thus counts on the loyalty of these followers to their chief. In other cases, the bond is [439] [466] [648]